Department of Human Services

Articles in Today's Clips

Wednesday, July 18, 2007

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Prepared by the
DHS Office of
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wood tv 8 24 HOUR NEWS 8 www.woodtv.com • Grand Rapids, MI

Mom kept kids despite neglect charges

Updated: July 17, 2007 11:18 PM EDT

By BRAD EDWARDS

GRAND RAPIDS - Melissa Matthews, the mother whose three-year-old son drowned in a neighbor's pool last week and who subsequently lost custody of her other children, had at least six complaints of neglect lodged against her, including one just weeks before the drowning.

24 Hour News 8 has obtained documents from Child Protective Services from August 2004, June 2005 and February 2006 about the way Matthews wasn't watching her kids as they wandered about her northwest side neighborhood, sometimes for hours, sometimes begging for food.

"They always would come and ask for food and water," said a neighbor, who preferred to remain anonymous. She says she and other neighbors complained to the CPS repeatedly.

"I don't know how many phone calls, minus kidnapping the child himself...it took him dying for any action to be taken. I don't understand," the neighbor said.

A source with intimate knowledge of the case told 24 Hour News 8 three more recent complaints were filed.

How could it happen that a mother who was found to be neglectful could keep her kids?

Advocates say the state systems have been cut too deeply, with 110 case workers cut since 2001.

Unfortunately, the investigation into Matthews' parenting came too late for 3-year-old Jeremiah.

"He had such a hard life, and it ended like that," Matthews' neighbor said.

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Everything Michigan

Child-abuse charge leveled in standoff

Wednesday, July 18, 2007

THE SAGINAW NEWS

WISNER TOWNSHIP -- A 23-year-old Unionville man faces a host of charges stemming from an incident in which police claim he tried to kill himself and his 1-month-daughter.

Prosecutors have charged Kevin E. Ewald with second-degree child abuse, two counts of resisting and obstructing police, interfering with electronic communications (hampering a 911 call, court staff said), and two counts of domestic assault.

Tuscola Count District Court Magistrate Joseph A. Van Auken arraigned Ewald on Tuesday and set a $50,000 cash or surety bond, which means defendants either must put up the full amount of cash or pay a surety agent 10 percent to guarantee their appearance in court.

Ewald remained jailed.

Van Auken set a preliminary exam for 9 a.m. Friday, July 27.

Concern over the baby is what brought police from Tuscola and Bay counties to a tense standoff Monday evening.

Officers say Ewald had assaulted his wife and 14-year-old daughter before he grabbed the toddler and told family members he was going to kill himself and his daughter by driving into a tree.

While family members were fighting Ewald for the baby, police said, dispatchers sought help from Hampton Township Police in Bay County, about five miles away, as police from Caro, about 20 miles away, were en route.

First Lt. Mitch Krugielki of the Bay Area Narcotics Enforcement Team, who was in the area, overheard the dispatchers and arrived at the Ewald home to keep them from leaving until other units, including the Tuscola County sheriff's deputies, arrived.

Police said the baby was in the back seat of the car and that Ewald was getting ready to leave when Krugielki arrived.

With other officers arriving, they arrested Ewald after a struggle. v

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Murder or manslaughter?

By SCOTT AIKEN
H-P Staff Writer

ST. JOSEPH — Jonathon Roseberry did not intend to kill 3-year-old Glenn Ferguson, and evidence will show the death was “an act of manslaughter,” the Benton Township man’s lawyer told a jury Tuesday.

In his opening statement in Roseberry’s trial, defense attorney James Boardman said his client was playing with the child in their home Jan. 14, bounced him on his knee, and may have been too rough.

Roseberry, 26, gave Glenn some “karate punches,” Boardman told the jury in Berrien County Trial Court, but did not intend to hurt him.

Boardman said evidence will show the case is one of manslaughter, not felony murder or second-degree murder as charged.

Assistant Prosecutor Jennifer Smith told jurors during the first day of trial that evidence will paint a very different picture.

Roseberry punched Glenn, the child of his girlfriend, hard enough to tear a section of intestine nearly in two, Smith said, culminating a string of abusive incidents.

The child suffered a lot of pain for two days after being punched, she said. Despite the best efforts of medical staffs at two hospitals, he was unable to survive surgery. “Glenn’s body, by the time he got to surgery, wasn’t able to deal with the trauma, and he shut down and passed away,” Smith said.

Roseberry admitted to police he punched Glenn twice in the stomach, Smith told the jury, but the admission came after the boy had died.

Evidence will show that Roseberry saw Glenn as a mama’s boy, Smith said, “and that’s why he punched him.”

Roseberry lived with Amber Palmateer, the child’s mother. She was at work when Glenn was punched, the prosecution alleges. If convicted as charged of murder during commission of a felony, child abuse, Roseberry would face life in prison without parole. Second-degree murder is punishable by up to life in prison.

Neal Vaughan / H-P staff
JONATHON ROSEBERRY listens to testimony during his trial on Tuesday in Berrien Trial Court, St. Joseph. Roseberry is accused of murdering his girlfriend’s 3-year-old son.

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Article published Jul 18, 2007
Adrian daycare owner reaches plea on child sex abuse charges
Associated Press

ADRIAN — The owner of a home daycare business who had been ordered to stand trial on 77 felony counts pleaded guilty Tuesday to five counts of criminal sexual conduct involving children under 13.

In a plea agreement, Douglas J. Clark, 52, admitted to four first-degree criminal sexual charges and one second-degree criminal sexual conduct charge. He also pleaded no contest to two first-degree sex charges.

A no contest plea is not an admission of guilt, but is treated as such for sentencing purposes. Clark faces up to life in prison when sentenced Aug. 24.

Clark operated Guardian Family Daycare from his home in Adrian, about 50 miles southwest of Detroit. Videotapes authorities say were recorded by Clark show him sexually abusing at least three infants, police said. Assistant Prosecutor Laura Schaedler said he had videotaped himself committing the acts.

Police began an investigation after being contacted by a parent of a child at the center.

The Michigan Department of Human Services suspended Clark's license in March. The notice said Clark had first obtained a certificate of registration to operate a day care in his home for six children beginning in July 2002.

mlive.com
Everything Michigan

There's no reason to tolerate abuse; get out and get help

Wednesday, July 18, 2007

TEENGROWTH.COM

Dear doctor: My dad and I threaten one another and this time I feel like I am actually going to kill him. He puts me down, and physically abuses me. My mom lives in another state because of the divorce and I don't feel comfortable talking to her. My guidance counselor doesn't help.

If I don't kill my dad, I'll kill myself. What do I do?

Dear reader: We are glad you have written in about your situation and hope that by the time you get these suggestions you will not have made any rash moves which might hurt you further or which might harm your father.

You need to put some safety measures in place immediately and get yourself help with a counselor who has training in providing care and counseling to someone who has been abused (my guess is for a long while).

You should not and do not need to continue being abused. So how do you get from what you find is a dangerous, no-win situation into a safer setting?

First, you will need help from some caring adult whom you will need to trust. You need to understand that some state systems will need to be activated. I suggest that you first turn to someone in your school, and it certainly does not have to be your guidance counselor.

Do you have a teacher or coach you trust and can talk to? Or go to the principal or assistant principal. Confide in them that you are being physically abused by your father, and that you are getting to a point where you might hurt him, or even hurt yourself.

For you to get out from under the untenable situation you are in, your case must be reported to your state's child protection system. The child protection person who responds probably will first interview you at school, and will begin to develop a plan for you.

If you have any relatives or other trusted adults in your community where you might go to live for a short-term situation while your case plan is developed it will be helpful to make those suggestions to the child protection worker.

Your school may have a psychologist who would be good to talk to, someone who can assess how stressed you are and if you need protective care in a hospital setting while your case plan is developed.

You may need to take out a restraining order against your father, especially after reporting. You have every right to refuse to go home to your father's care after reporting, especially if you know his reaction may be abusive. If necessary, say this to your school professional and/or the child protection caseworker who first speaks with you.

If you do not feel you can reach out to any school official, then you could turn to the juvenile department in your local police department, and talk to them about your abuse. Or you can report to your state's child protection system yourself, but you need to be in a safe place when you do this, and not be at home.

Once your case is reported to the child protection system in most states you will be assigned your own legal counsel, a law guardian.

If your situation has gotten you to a point where you think you will really act out by hurting your father or yourself, please immediately go to your nearest hospital, tell them about your feelings of possibly hurting yourself or someone else and they can intervene with both a crisis mental health protective assessment and with a child protection plan.

There are a couple of national hot lines that may offer you some advice. If you think you are at a point where you might hurt yourself you may call 800-SUICIDE (784-2433) or 800-273-TALK (8255). Girls and Boys Town National Hotline at (800) 448-3000 also might be a useful resource to talk to someone about creating a safety plan for yourself.

Bottom line is that you must do something now. You should not tolerate being abused any longer. There is real help out there to get you to emotional healing even if you have had a very difficult abusive childhood.

Please don't ever answer violence with violence. Getting state systems involved to help you with a safety plan will also make your father have to get into assessment and maybe get him into the care he has needed for a long while. If alcohol or substance use has been underlying his abusiveness, having you move out into a different setting may finally force him into recognizing he needs help for a substance abuse problem as well.

You need a caring adult to help you move forward with this hard, most important step of your life.v

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The Macomb Daily
www.macombdaily.com

Teen volunteers donate to kids cause

By Jameson Cook
Macomb Daily Staff Writer

An organization that provides counseling and other support to child victims of sexual abuse received an unexpected $600 donation this week from an unexpected source.

John Frabotta Jr. and Michael Mavis of Grosse Pointe donated the money they made in parking fees in the lot of the Old Macomb Daily Building in Mount Clemens during the Stars & Stripes Festival to Care House.

"This money will go to our general fund, which is always needed," said Dorie Vazquez-Nolan. "It's really encouraging to see young people who look outside of themselves and want to help other kids in need."

The two boys, aged 18 and 13, ran the parking lot during the inaugural festival June 29-July 1, attended by 300,000 people. They are the sons of John Frabotta, who owns the building.

John and Michael told their father after the festival they wanted to donate some of the money to charity. Frabotta's partner, George Adams, sits on the Care House board.

The money is especially appreciated because Care House's revenues have dropped in the past year, and most money it receives must be spent on specific programs.

The organization's budget of $630,000 this year is down from more than $700,000 in 2006, Vazquez-Nolan said, due to declining donations and grants.

Care House has reduced its staff from 10 to seven since last year, with two counseling positions being moved to the juvenile division of Macomb County Circuit Court and its fundraising post remaining vacant after Dana Peterson left to become a county commissioner, she said.

Despite the cuts, Vazquez-Nolan said, the organization's members "really feel fortunate to have the long-standing support of people in Macomb County, both young and old."

Care House raised nearly $1,000 by running two beer booths at the festival.

Since 1996, Care House has provided services to more than 5,000 families, conducted more than 2,600 forensic interviews, performed more than 200 forensic medical evaluations and provided ongoing counseling services.

Click here to return to story:
http://www.macombdaily.com/stories/071807/loc_carehouse001.shtml

A quick response

SAULT STE. MARIE - Area law enforcement agencies are participating in the “A Child is Missing Program, adding an effective tool in the event of a disappearance.

“It worked well,” said Chief Lou Murray analyzing the results of the Sault Police Department's first call. “It gets the message out in a hurry.”

Back in June, a seven-year-old boy wandered away from home to visit a relative who lived nearby, failing to notify anyone of his intentions before departing. While the story had a happy ending, there were some tense moments for the family and law enforcement officials until the boy was located.

As part of the search, city police utilized the Florida-based “A Child is Missing Program” activating an electronic recording which called every residence in the immediate area providing a description of the missing boy.

“The public is anxious to help,” said Murray of the calls that came in to Chippewa County Central Dispatch assisting law enforcement in this matter. “It was a good trial run.”

Nationwide, over 200 families have been reunited under this program.

Before the national call line was established, law enforcement officials would spend hours canvassing the neighborhoods hoping to run into someone who had seen the missing child. With the automated telephone calls going to each and every landline within the targeted area, that same information can be relayed throughout the area in a matter of minutes, providing faster feedback from the residents.

“As soon as you get a complaint like that, you are under a lot of pressure,” said Murray adding time is critical in any incident where a child is missing. While abductions certainly prompt the biggest fears, other scenarios where children are trapped inside of something such as old appliances, abandoned wells or vehicle trunks also require the quickest possible reaction times.

Office of Emergency Services and Chippewa County Central Dispatch Director Tim McKee said the program puts a lot of eyes and ears on instant alert.

“It basically asks people to look out their window,” he said. “In a matter of minutes the calls are headed out to the residents of the area.”

McKee said it does take some tweaking to get the computer-generated voice to accurately pronounce the words before the calls are made. Without the adjustments the city of Sault Ste. Marie is spoken as “Salt Stee Marie” which could confuse the person on the other end of the line

FEDERAL FUNDING

Participation in A Child is Missing does not require any local financial contributions as the program is entirely funded through federal sources.

Foster parents to protest in Lansing

Parents, lawmakers on different sides on Senate Bill 232

By Kristen Abraham

MID-MICHIGAN (WJRT) - (07/18/07)--Mid-Michigan foster parents are taking their campaign to Lansing to protest a bill that aims to privatize the foster care system.

Some parents say it's too risky while lawmakers say it saves money.

One lawmaker says this bill will improve care for foster kids, while dozens plan to protest Senate Bill 232 on the steps of the Capitol today (Wednesday).

Signs have been made and the mission is clear: Mid-Michigan foster parents are speaking out privatizing the state's foster care system will hurt children.

"This bill is about money not children," said foster care parent Kim Rowan. "I've talked to many parents who are like, 'What in the world?' Our motto is, 'Whose bright idea is this?'"

Forty percent of foster care services, juvenile justice services and adoption are already in the hands of community-based agencies. State Senate Bill 232 wants to transfer the rest.

Rowan questions whether the private agencies can handle the workload. Sen. Roger Kahn says this bill will provide the best possible care and save money.

"It's anticipated we will save about $30 million a year, so we are going to improve the product, save money and improve supervision," Kahn said. "That's a pretty impressive three home runs."

Kahn adds the bill will allow the Department of Human Services to beef up supervision and children will receive care from accredited and licensed people.

But Rowan says if this bill passes, it takes away an important choice for foster parents.

"Foster parents license through the DHS," she said. "If this changes, we no longer have a choice and will have to connect with a private (organization)."

DHS conducted their own analysis on the bill. They believe it will cost $27 million more to implement.

Kahn says the bill should pass in the Senate. The protest begins at 9 a.m.

*You can see the ABC12 report by clicking on the video icon above. You will need Windows Media Player to view this video. You can get it FREE by clicking here. NOTE: Video clips will only be available for 7-days from the date they were created. ALSO: Video clips may play in a separate window, without audio, on Mac OS X machines. abc12.com is aware of this issue and is working with the video player vendor to correct it as soon as possible.**Copyright 2007 ABC Inc., WJRT-TV Inc.*

GAYLORD HERALD TIMES
A View from the 45th Parallel - News You Deserve Est. 1875

More join 'Love You' packs campaign to help foster kids

By Jil Schult, Staff Writer

OTSEGO COUNTY — Because she knows firsthand the indignant process of moving between foster homes, Jeanne Fowler, Michigan-based author of “Peter’s Lullaby,” started the “Love You” packs campaign which provides backpacks to foster children.

After reading Fowler’s horrific account of extreme child abuse and the death of her brother, Peter, crime victim advocate Cathy Baragrey with the Otsego County prosecutor’s office, felt compelled to join Fowler’s campaign, initiating a campaign of her own for the foster children of Otsego County. And now, Treetops has jumped on board (see related story).

According to Baragrey, close to 17,000 children in Michigan — about 100 in Otsego County — are living in foster care homes.

“My goal is 100 (packs),” said Baragrey, who added she hopes to collect even more for new foster children expected this year.

After reading about her campaign in the Herald Times, Treetops Resort Director of Golf Kevin McKinley contacted Baragrey with a plan to organize a July 23 golf outing to raise awareness about Otsego County foster children.

The Love You packs program is intended to ease the moving of foster children, said Fowler, who explained that in the 1950s when a child moved between foster homes, all of their possessions were placed in garbage bags.

“We aren’t trash, we’re children,” said Fowler of the need for what she refers to as “dignity bags.”

She explained the process of removing a child from a home is very different from the child’s perspective.

“Before the police ever come, before a social worker ever comes, our journey of abuse has already started,” said Fowler. “We don’t know why you’re there when you come to rescue us,” Fowler added. “Mom and Dad can’t be wrong — they’re adults — we don’t know you.”

Fowler noted the foster child process has come along way from her own experience in the 1950s. She hopes the packs will make a difference.

“Now imagine, a lady brings us a little bag, in it is a Beanie Baby, crayons, coloring book, pens and paper. We don’t remember what the policeman’s doing, we color and we feel soothed.”

A simple pack of their own, filled with some school supplies can make the tears stop flowing.

“Everything I didn’t get as a foster child,” said Fowler, “I give today.”

For more information, contact Baragrey at cbaragrey@otsego countymi.gov or by phone at 731-7431.

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When fathers are in arrears, everyone else pays

Wednesday, July 18, 2007

Father's Day was a few weeks ago, and some dads received ugly ties, cheap cologne or golf balls.

Some of these dads likely accepted gifts they didn't deserve because they don't understand what fatherhood is.

So many fathers in our community aren't financially taking care of their children, but we, the taxpayers, are.

The Saginaw County Friend of the Court says fathers owe children in this community $28 million in 24,000 cases going back decades. Officials say the numbers likely are higher.

That's mind-boggling -- and it's a shame. That's more than $1,100 owed per dad, although some owe far more, some less and some offend repeatedly.

So many dads aren't owning up to their responsibilities.

When these fathers appear in court on contempt charges, they give excuses for not taking care of their kids: They don't have a job; they don't make enough money; they were out of town; they didn't know they had to pay.

There are no excuses. If you made the baby, you take care of the baby. In many instances, fathers have had multiple children with multiple women.

Under state law, the least amount of money a dad without a job has to pay is $8 a week for one child. You can find bottles or cans on the street, mow a lawn or shovel snow to earn $8 a week.

Dads have to avoid these exorbitant arrears. It's not good for the child, and it's especially not good for the public because we have to pay for the dads who could end up in jail or prison for not paying child support.

Judges tell these men to get a job, get a second job, a third job. Some of them do and live up to their obligations.

There are others who go from job to job to avoid paying support. Judges have something for those people too. If you don't pay, you could have a lower credit rating and lose your driver's or hunting licenses. Of course, we wouldn't want to stop them from bagging that deer during hunting season, would we?

Then they shouldn't deprive these innocent kids of a decent upbringing or rearing.

There are good fathers out there who pay their support.

In August 2003, Saginaw County Circuit Judge Fred L. Borchard sentenced a 34-year-old father of seven to 75 days in jail for failing to pay more than $73,000 in child support. This man had seven children with seven women. He should have four jobs.

Nearly three years later, Borchard sentenced a 40-year-old man to up to four years in prison for failing to pay child support for his three children.

That was the first time in Saginaw County history that a judge sentenced a man to prison for failing to pay child support. The man, who had training as a drywall finisher, was $15,177 in arrears. He was to pay $175 a week.

Department of Corrections officials released the man June 12 -- five days before Father's Day. Corrections officials, however, will keep tabs on him until December 2008. If he doesn't do what he's supposed to do, he should land behind bars again.

The rest of us shouldn't have to take care of his children. v

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Charlotte.com

Wednesday, Jul 18, 2007

Posted on Tue, Jul. 17, 2007

Background checks help protect elderly

By KEVIN FREKING

About 5,000 applicants for jobs caring for the elderly have been rejected after background checks disclosed criminal records or a history of abusing patients.

The results, compiled by the Senate Aging Committee, represent lawmakers' first efforts at evaluating a pilot program, used in seven states, that was designed to reduce cases of people preying on the elderly.

Congress approved the program in 2003. It gave the selected states the seed money - $16.4 million in all - to beef-up their background checks for workers who care for the elderly, primarily nursing home staff. Now, some lawmakers believe the findings justify expanding the program nationally.

"It's helped identify thousands of people who should not be working in nursing homes," said Sen. Herb Kohl, D-Wis., chairman of the Senate Aging Committee. "Every facility that hires these people should have that information available to them."

Nursing home workers in every state are subject to some type of background check. But federal investigators describe the overall effort as a patchwork system - one filled with dangerous gaps.

For example, each state maintains a registry of nurse aides who have been found guilty by a court or who have been deemed by state officials as mistreating residents or defrauding them.

However, many states only check the names on their own nurse aide registry. They don't check the names on other states' registries.

Most states also require criminal background checks, but the inspector general for the Department of Health and Human Services recently concluded that the checks were often limited in scope. Again, they were often limited to crimes in just one state.

The pilot project helped states pay for establishing and operating more extensive databases. Job applicants screened through the pilot project were required to submit fingerprints so that they could be checked at the national level for a criminal history.

Access to the FBI's national database was key, Kohl said. Some workers with checkered histories move frequently to gain work caring for the elderly in nursing homes, hospice centers and home health agencies.

Michigan, which got the largest grant, $3.5 million, used the money to link several databases, including the state's sex offender registry and its nurse aide registry. More than 3,100 applicants in Michigan were excluded during that phase of the search.

If no matches are found in the various registries, then the applicant's fingerprints are sent to the Michigan State Police and to the FBI. About 700 more were excluded after that phase, according to the Aging Committee's review.

The result: About 5 percent of applicants in Michigan were prevented from working in nursing homes, as well as hospice centers, home health agencies and psychiatric hospitals.

For those with criminal histories, about a quarter had drug or theft offenses. Orlene Christie of Michigan's Department of Community Health said excluding individuals with such records makes sense given their access to patient's medicine as well as financial information, such as credit cards.

"The people who work in our facilities may have access to prescription drugs, financial and medical records and other identifying information," Christie said. "In this age of identity theft and drug abuse, we must give our patients peace of mind while they are cared for in our facilities."

Kohl made clear that the large majority of nursing home workers do a good job of caring for the elderly. But, the committee's review of the pilot project indicates that about 3 to 5 percent of applicants have a background that should preclude them from working in such facilities.

Each year, ombudsmen for nursing home patients get thousands of complaints alleging abuse, neglect or exploitation. In 2005, ombudsmen got 20,622 such complaints. Of those complaints, about 5,200 alleged physical abuse and 1,200 alleged sexual abuse. Another 4,100 alleged verbal or mental abuse.

Besides Michigan, the states participating in the pilot project were Alaska, Idaho, Illinois, Nevada, New Mexico and Wisconsin. Some of the states used the funding for more extensive checks in just a few counties. The program ends Sept. 30, but all seven states plan to continue their expanded background checks in some form, the Aging Committee's review indicated.

Location of current Ontonagon Department of Human Services office still under discussion

Published Tuesday, July 17, 2007 4:58:49 PM Central Time

By JAN TUCKER

Globe Staff Writer

ONTONAGON -- The Ontonagon office of the Department of Human Services is not packing its bags and moving to Bessemer, according to Gordon Pekuri, director of the Gogebic-Ontonagon DHS. The rumor of the closing of the DHS office has been circulating in the community. Although Pekuri said the office is not closing, there have been and are still changes being made in its operation which have led to the rumors.

"The State of Michigan is broke," the Pekuri said, adding that for the past few years when employees have retired they have not been replaced. He said that the present office has become too big and indicated the state is negotiating for another home. He added he could not comment on those negotiations which are being done by the Department of Management and Budget.

"Two service workers from Ontonagon travel to Bessemer to work," said Pekuri. "There is only one supervisor in that department and he felt the child service workers should be under a supervisor."

Pekuri stressed while those workers were now in Gogebic county, they work out of both counties and travel back and forth.

Pekuri said Family Independence Specialists and eligibility specialists provide medical and food assistance will remain in Ontonagon.

"There will be no need for anyone seeking assistance to travel to Bessemer for help," he said in answer to some critics who felt that service moving out of Ontonagon would mean fewer recipients coming to Ontonagon for help.

While the director said he could not comment on where in Ontonagon that service would be provided, he assumed that the move from the present building, which DHS shares with the Motor Vehicle Department, would happen soon.

"Service will be done in Ontonagon, but in a different way," he added.

One criticism for moving the child service worker to Bessemer was that if a serious complaint was made it would take an hour for a child service worker to get to the scene.

Pekuri said that is true, but when those complaints formerly came from South Ontonagon County the service worker in Ontonagon was still 35 to 40 minutes away.

"These are not decisions taken lightly," Pekuri said. "Sometimes it might be a hardship for the staff but the service will be the same to Ontonagon County. Ontonagon County has a really good staff and they help one another."

"There still will be case workers in the Ontonagon office and other service workers will still travel to Ontonagon on a regular basis to serve clients," Pekuri concluded.